

‘Shared Vision for a Better World’

IOL Conference 14th October 2023 - online

Sponsored by [British Canoeing](#)

On the 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023, on World Standards Day, the Institute for Outdoor Learning held its first completely online conference. It was important for the IOL to “walk the talk” of sustainability and so we chose to share good practice far and wide using a state of the art online conferencing platform rather than fossil fuels. The lower cost, not only of joining the conference, but also travel, accommodation, food and lower time commitment were particularly important during the peak of the cost of living crisis. This made the conference accessible to a much wider section of the outdoor learning family.

We invited all to contribute to creating our shared vision for a better outdoor learning world.

Agreed professional, occupational and benchmark standards are testament to the power of cooperation and the belief that we are stronger than the sum of our parts. By working together, we are empowering ourselves to meet our challenges head-on and find real-world solutions.

The IOL has 'Standards' as one of its 4 key priorities, along with Community, Workforce and Voice. As the charity for professionals in Outdoor Learning, the IOL works to develop and define quality standards which includes supporting research and promoting good practice.

In 2023 the World Standards day sought to highlight how recognised and accepted standards are built on collaborative working. It placed the emphasis on the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The IOL has sustainability as a 'Golden Thread' and is working to make planetary and organisational sustainability run through all we do.

The IOL Conference was packed full of useful content that engaged us as a community - and in a more sustainable online way.

And now you can travel back in time and attend the conference for yourself!

Here it is:

Welcome by Jo Barnett, IOL CEO, and Mike King, Chair of IOL Trustees.

Followed by our first Guest Speaker:

**Manjul Prateeti**

**Shared Vision for a Better World; An Indian Perspective**

Manjul is General Manager for Educational Delivery and Outdoor Education Professional Development at The Outdoor Education Group. A graduate of Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh. Adventure enthusiast and passionate outdoor learning facilitator, Manjul Prateeti has spent the last thirteen years working internationally from India to America and now Australia helping to develop and facilitate quality outdoor education programs.

[https://youtu.be/c6\\_604k2nsc](https://youtu.be/c6_604k2nsc)

Workshop Session 1

With a choice of 8 Workshops:

- **SUSTAINABILITY Novelty in Nature - Appreciating new ways to value the natural world** (Jill Dawes & Matt Healey)

This workshop was interactive, experiential and explorative, addressing pro-climate creativity. Sharing insights on how OL practitioners envisage new approaches to learning that develop self, others and nature collectively and ethically in what has been called ‘the new climatic regime’. Whether considering how new programs can be developed, how long-lasting connections to nature can be formed, or how OL can build credible responses to the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals this workshop provides an inclusive and accessible access route to future IOL opportunities to engage with ecological transformations across our sector. Our aim was to critically explore sector wide sustainable transformations that mitigate climate change, provide strong sustainable business models and also deliver powerful outdoor experiences that promote well-being for people, places and planet. This workshop combined insights from established concepts in positive psychology, sustainable business transformations and nature connection. Going beyond localised discussions of recycling to address bigger concerns in provoking pro-environmental behaviour change through OL.

Not recorded.
- **COMMUNITY Taking Adventure to the Lived Environment - Parkour and the relationship with the local environment** (Charlotte Boenigk)

There is a growing awareness of the impact of urban living on mental health and wellbeing. Those living in an urban environment are at greater risk of mental health difficulties such as anxiety and depression through to bipolar and schizophrenia. The governments recent health and wellbeing plan recognises the need for greater engagement with nature based physical activity to mitigate these risks. However, for those at greatest risk of the inequalities of mental health, many nature based physical activities may be inaccessible due to time, distance or cost.

In this workshop, Charlotte and Richard discussed how to bring nature based physical activity into the individuals lived environment and how to use parkour as a means of redefining our relationship with the urban environment.

<https://youtu.be/Q1zI-tNTv9U>
- **VOICE Political campaigning and networking** (Ian Lewis)

The outdoor learning world has many valuable opportunities to gain support from those outside - many of whom we depend on for support, promotion and survival. This active workshop comprised an explanation, and discussion, of why and how this needs to be exploited, and offered opportunity to access effective tools to broadcast what we do to those who use, support and could help further build our sector. We covered skills of self-promotion, communication and influencing potential supporters, clients, decision-makers with and through the media. The aim being to motivate and enable their support for our services and sector.

[https://youtu.be/tgpfdo\\_QXLg](https://youtu.be/tgpfdo_QXLg)
- **THEORY Philosophy for Children** (Jane Yates & Gina Parker Mullarkey)

An introduction to the use of philosophical enquiry in the outdoors. Participants experienced taking part in some P4C – which is always the best way to learn. A variety of starting points were shared which participants could adapt to their own outdoor learning sessions. Relevant projects and initiatives will be outlined, including the Thinking with Nature Project and Philosofuns.

<https://youtu.be/bM1lNEYjOY0>

- EDI Arthog Ambassadors - Reaching Diverse Young People in the Outdoors (Rob Wilson)  
Spotlighting on the nuanced dynamics of engaging ethnically diverse communities in outdoor projects—an endeavour often deemed non-essential by certain segments or perceived as hard to reach by established organizations. This workshop delved into the multifaceted landscape of challenges and rewards, shedding light on why it is imperative to ensure inclusivity and equity. Our discussions covered the art of preparation—both at the individual and group levels, as well as within the family context. By understanding the diverse backgrounds and perspectives present within these communities, we can better equip ourselves to foster an environment that fosters trust, open communication, and active participation. Furthermore, the impact of religious festivals, practices, and dietary considerations cannot be underestimated in the context of outdoor projects. The workshop provided insights into how to navigate these intricacies, respecting and accommodating the diverse religious beliefs and cultural practices of participants. We explored strategies to harmonize the project schedule with religious obligations, cater to specific dietary needs, and facilitate spaces for prayer and reflection. In conclusion, this workshop aspired to equip participants with the knowledge, skills, and empathy needed to initiate and execute outdoor projects that genuinely encompass the richness of diversity within ethnically varied communities. By addressing challenges, celebrating successes, and fostering an inclusive mindset, we can ensure that no young person is left behind, and that the great outdoors becomes an avenue for growth, connection, and empowerment for all.

<https://youtu.be/0cxVxWalowc>

- STANDARDS Accreditation by the IOL for your courses (EQA) (Steve Parry)  
Course accreditation with the Institute for Outdoor Learning assists instructors, teachers, leaders and managers of Outdoor Learning in identifying quality courses that are relevant to their needs. It helps providers demonstrate their CPD event, FE/HE course, or staff training programme is well designed, and fit for outdoor learning professionals.
  - Demonstrate the value of your course for outdoor learning professionals.
  - Show your commitment to good practice and quality assurance.
  - Publicise to our mailing list of instructors, teachers, leaders, educators and managers.
  - Share your resource - with our 10,100 social media contacts, and beyond.
  - Stand out - be one of a select number of courses aligned to quality standards and able to display the IOL Accredited Course badge.
  - List your course on our website - we receive over 300,000 visits every year.
  - Get support - use the accreditation process as a staff professional development opportunity and make improvements to your course.

<https://youtu.be/dqUCRk54FqA>

- WORKFORCE Being AdventureSmart (Paul Donovan & Emma Edwards-Jones)  
This workshop provided insight into smart talking about safety in the outdoors by firstly providing an overview of the AdventureSmart campaign and highlighting some of the assets created and the journey taken to achieve the 'simple & clear' messages. With this in mind, we then take you on a similar journey of your own to experience the process of developing an effective, consistent, positive, friendly, integrated approach to communicating safety in the outdoors to an audience defined, and possibly limited by their knowledge and experience of outdoor recreation activities.

<https://youtu.be/YWTxZIOuGIM>

- WORKFORCE RPIOL - Becoming an awarding Centre (Steve Randles / Julian Pierce)  
Not recorded.

Our second Guest Speaker:

Robin Millar, MP for Aberconwy - Championing Outdoor Learning in Parliament.

As co-chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Outdoor Learning, Robin Millar shared how he is championing Outdoor Learning in Parliament. The role of the APPG is to provide a platform and focus for the various representative organisations involved in the Outdoor Learning sector; to encourage their access to parliamentarians; and to enable collaboration and discussion.

<https://youtu.be/C9siaMgSdb8>

## Workshop Session 2

With a choice of 6 Workshops:

- SUSTAINABILITY Sustainability in practice - Future Footprints (Dan Playford and Martin Callaghan)  
This workshop looked at the practical steps that can be made to achieve the Future Footprints initiative's goal, of developing an understanding of, and desire to achieve, a sustainable future environment on our planet through engagement in outdoor education. The workshop was aimed at anyone who wants to make a difference through their work in outdoor education. The workshop will entail the following
  - Brief background to Future Footprints
  - Case studies on current initiatives
  - An overview of other organisations initiatives that can support practices
  - Practical ways you can get involved
  - Input into a survey which is going to be shared with outdoor learning providers to gather an overview of where the sector is at

<https://youtu.be/py1n2nX3XhA>
- COMMUNITY Update on the John Muir Award (Graham Watson)  
We shared why we are redesigning the John Muir Award, what stage we are at and how you can help. Background: The John Muir Trust wishes to expand its reach to a greater number of people and communities across the UK to help build awareness, experience and understanding of the many and varied benefits a connection to wild places can bring. The more people value wild places the more they will join the Trust on the journey to advocate for their protection. Wild places are for all, and everyone can help protect them. The John Muir Award remains a vital component of the Trust. It creates partnerships, connections and reach. Following a review of its engagement work and new strategy, the John Muir Trust wishes to ensure that the Award has a bright future in a rapidly changing world. Find out more on the Trust's plans to redesign its John Muir Award by visiting the Award Redesign webpages.  
<https://youtu.be/bRQ5MU8NwMc>
- VOICE Achieving a One-Sector Voice at Westminster (IOL Employers Group)  
This workshop considered the challenges and opportunities associated with developing more clarity in the sector's voice at Westminster. Many lessons were learnt from the work to change the UK government's stance on residential educational visits during the COVID pandemic. Much time and energy has gone into seeking more cohesion and a

better profile for Outdoor Learning in UK society since that time. There is plenty left to do and the workshop will look at current activity and options being considered to ensure a significant and strategic voice is achieved on behalf of the sector. Please join us if you're interested how we might raise the value placed on outdoor learning across the UK through common purpose and clarity of voice.

<https://youtu.be/9raKhryBl9A>

- STANDARDS The value of Outdoor Education Advisors Panel National Guidance to Outdoor Professionals (Steve Lenartowicz)

The workshop outlined the history and scope of National Guidance, its principles and philosophy, and its relevance to outdoor learning professionals in various roles. It provides participants with the opportunity to explore and critique its contents and to suggest ways in which it could be improved.

<https://youtu.be/DMRJuxbSCZs>

- STANDARDS Adventure Travel Guide Standard (Myles Farnbank)

Adventure travel guides are central to the delivery of professional, responsible and meaningful adventure travel experiences. The rapid growth in adventure travel in recent decades has led to an increase in demand for professional adventure travel guides and highlighted the need for an accessible, clear and universal adventure travel guide standard. Adventure guides manage safety and risks and ensure the overall quality of participant's experience while safeguarding both adventure travel company and destination reputations. Moreover, adventure travel guides have a critical role to play in delivering and educating about sustainability with focus on the climate emergency, biodiversity preservation, social impacts of global tourism and biosecurity issues. The first edition of the Adventure Travel Guide Standard (ATGS) was published in 2016. This led to the creation of a governance board of adventure travel professionals around the world who promote and provide training and support.

<https://youtu.be/VnlARYGp30M>

- WORKFORCE Apprenticeships that support Outdoor Learning – an overview across the standards (Steve Randles) | WORKFORCE Surviving a Career in the Outdoors (Pete White, AAIAAC)

We explored what working and having a career in the outdoors means within the UK. Through this we start to unpack some of the challenges that are faced when pursuing this exciting career path, such as personal injury through chronic or catastrophic accidents, or emotional challenges whilst working with particular groups. Based around AAIAAC's 'Surviving a Career in Adventure Activities' guidance we will discuss these and other considerations that are essential to having a fulfilling and enjoyable career in the outdoors. Taking this further, we look beyond the barriers and challenges to an outdoor career and consider the positive influences that encourage us to continue working or volunteering within the outdoor sector. With a growing emphasis on professionalism within the sector, this workshop finishes by looking at how adopting this approach may help us to not only survive – but thrive in a career in the outdoors.

<https://youtu.be/fKcCXMA7H6E>

IOL Updates – Jo Barnett, the IOL CEO gave an overview of the IOL and it's current projects.

<https://youtu.be/VQu9uu74n-g>

Our Third Guest Speaker:

Rich Alderton – Our need to be more adaptable

Rich shows us that Adaptability:

- is THE skill you need to keep accessing all your other skills just when they're all needed the most - when you're faced with the need to change
- needs to be at the heart of your culture, encouraging staff to think, speak and act differently
- can be learned and mastered, just like any other leadership skill
- enables you not just to bounce back, but to bounce higher

This talk is for those:

- who are responsible for leadership development
- whose organisation's external environment is (or is at risk of) moving faster than their internal environment
- who want to know there's a way out of the increasing amounts of fear and anxiety that change is causing

You'll be given an overview of our roadmap that covers the full spectrum of Adaptability Intelligence, from the fear of change to the freedom to change. And you'll be given a couple of practical antidotes to combat the reasons people resist change. By the end, you'll understand that change - even negative change - is the best chance you're ever going to get to make a difference, and to find out what you're capable of. And when you can see change in those terms, well, that changes everything.

<https://youtu.be/J-RFGVNek7U>

Workshop Session 3

With a choice of 7 Workshops:

- **SUSTAINABILITY** Outdoor Wellbeing and Therapy - Competence, Sustainability and Ethics (Neal Anderson, Andy Hardie & Kaye Richards)  
How do you provide safe, accessible and ethical programmes and services that offer health and wellbeing benefits for individuals, society and our planet? The session introduced the recently published research informed 'Six P Sustainability Indicators' resource and the 2023 updates to the 'IOL Statement of Good practice on Outdoor Therapy' covering individual competence, contra-indications and indicators of good practice.  
<https://youtu.be/Pur2xN6xHfQ>
- **COMMUNITY** Youth development and outdoor learning at sea (Kirsty French)  
For years, sail training has provided a platform for young people to step well beyond their comfort zone, live on a moving platform and learn the ropes alongside building key skills in teamwork, confidence, resilience, communication and decision making. Stepping onboard, young people step away from the world they know and enter the maritime environment where your walking world becomes the length of the vessel and your living space significantly reduced and the only way to get from A to B is to move safely in your space, actively engage, set the sails and go. Engagement in such an immersive physical environment takes no passengers and joining the world of Outdoor Learning allows us to share our offshore experiences in Youth Development with the rest of the IOL



community. Since Covid, all areas of learning outside the classroom have fought to re-establish their benefits and impacts with decision makers, but the needs of young people have significantly changed in the last few years leading to managing more behaviour that challenges, creating a need based learning environment and exposing young people to the wealth of opportunities that exists beyond their day to day lives. Creating a safe and challenging environment for our young people as they journey into adulthood is central to our purpose and shared vision with OL.

[https://youtu.be/unSMYVIR\\_Xs](https://youtu.be/unSMYVIR_Xs)

- VOICE Nature Premium (Sara Collins)

An update on the Nature Premium campaign progress – our approach, thinking and pre-general election goals. We are asking the government to guarantee regular and ongoing nature experiences for all children and young people with additional funding for those that need it most. Find out how you can help children to ‘grow up greener’.

[https://youtu.be/Tvp\\_o-SBQe4](https://youtu.be/Tvp_o-SBQe4)

- THEORY Bushcraft Ontology (Paul Moseley)

[https://youtu.be/pjJxV\\_XPj8](https://youtu.be/pjJxV_XPj8)

- EDI Equality, Diversity & Inclusion in Outdoor Learning (Global Butterflies, Sponsored by Activities Industry Mutual AIM)

This workshop will help you explore and understand LGBTQI+ terminology, heteronormativity, intersectionality, raise awareness of LGBTQI+ history plus equipping you with the skills and confidence to be a LGBTQI+ Ally in your workplace.

<https://youtu.be/RIAXEW0FW8Q>

- STANDARDS Encouraging active, challenging and safe expeditions for young people (Haydyn Tanner)

Increasingly young people are sensitive to environmental abuse whilst they (and their parents) demand that the provision of expeditions is made in a way that has transparency of the risks involved and the quality of the venture will be of the highest standard and value for money. The latter is often expressed as “what they will get out of it” – really meaning the value of the outdoor learning experience. How can we as providers try to meet the sustainability issues when time and money is limited for an experience abroad? YET lead a discussion on this topic to gather and share examples of good practice across the sector. Standards have always been a concern and fortunately in the UK we have numerous ways that providers can demonstrate that they operate as well as possible to deliver a high-quality learning experience. Since its outset 50 years ago YET has always striven to aid providers meeting these targets. YET will outline some of the ways it has witnessed good practice of providers ensuring that potential participants (and parents) receive the best information possible before committing to a venture, how good leadership is inculcated into the ethos of a venture, and designated purposes are achieved to lead to high quality outcomes.

<https://youtu.be/4LEfmhjLadI>

- WORKFORCE Modern Apprenticeships: ‘Outdoor Activity Instructor (L3) and Outdoor Learning Specialist (L5) - an overview’ (Jim Whittaker)

We believe that Apprenticeships are an incredibly powerful tool to attract and develop diverse talent in outdoor learning and to provide cost-effective solutions for employers in our sector. Apprenticeships can ease the pains of recruiting and training new staff and of developing and retaining existing staff. The current recruitment crisis in our sector brings fresh challenge for us all and we need no-nonsense, trusted solutions for those

who deliver outdoor learning in our society. In this presentation we will show how Apprenticeships can help you Recruit, Train and Retain the very best staff. Case studies from current employers, perspectives from instructors and staff, examples of training and the opportunity to ask questions and engage in discussion - this dynamic presentation will show how we can help you develop your workforce and support your business.

<https://youtu.be/ah6BMUXPhJo>

Our Fourth Guest Speaker:

Catrin Thomas - Snow, Science and Penguins - Working in Antarctica

This talk focuses on what I do when I venture south every season. A common question I get is 'what do you actually do down there?', so I shall attempt to answer this. In the main, this will provide an overview of the range of projects which is a good opportunity to show some slides to generate much envy! In order to work for BAS, quite an emphasis is placed on remote travel, plus strong alpine/greater ranges experience. This is seen as essential in order to make sure that field guides can cope with being left to their own devices in the middle of nowhere for up to a few months at a time. Not only is the psychological element of isolation important here, but also the logistics of managing a variety of camps with hugely varying objectives, equipment and fuel needs; much of this is learnt on the job, but the basics come from prior personal experience. I shall give some insight into what all this looks and feels like when in such an unusual environment. This all leads into the question of sustainability, which I shall address, albeit briefly. As once one looks at the massive effort required to implement a field season, then the question must be asked: is it worth it? Certainly, the nature of science in the Antarctic has changed dramatically over the past 20 years, helped for example by the improvement in technology. Remote sensing, satellite technology, and drone surveys for example, have all helped to glean crucial information that reduce the need for feet on the ground, but I would argue that 'ground truthing' through field science is still a critical component to understanding what is happening on our planet.

<https://youtu.be/GJemQjf9BT8>

Workshop Session 4

With a choice of 7 Workshops:

- **SUSTAINABILITY Carbon Calculators** –an easy approach to measuring impact and progress (Gary Richards)  
Measuring your personal impact or your organisations on the environment is becoming more and more relevant within the climate crisis the world is finding itself. This workshop sign posts you to both personal greenhouse gas calculators and ones which may be used to in an outdoor centre or business context.  
<https://youtu.be/n7sC9TQYwNs>
- **COMMUNITY The National Outdoor Learning Award** (Dr Roger Hopper)  
Prior to the workshop an earlier IOL NOLA webinar was shared that explains the underpinning development, theory and summary application of NOLA. This workshop built on that video and gave you the opportunity to work out how to apply NOLA in your outdoor learning context. Roger is the developer of NOLA and has supported numerous



outdoor providers to apply NOLA in many different contexts for participants with diverse needs and ages.

Not Recorded. But here is the recording of the webinar: <https://youtu.be/D6eEnBKnrh4>

- **VOICE What is High Quality in Outdoor Learning? (Dave Harvey)**  
Outdoor learning has a key role to play in the 21st century but is our understanding of practice up to date? The challenges of wellbeing, climate change, and equality, diversity and inclusion provide numerous opportunities for practitioners to make a positive difference. This workshop explored the elements of high quality outdoor learning. The outputs from this workshop went on to inform a new IOL guide to outdoor learning that will bring together current ideas reflecting both practice and academic research from across the field. It will complement existing publications, and serve as a benchmark for practice for the IOL and wider outdoor learning field.  
<https://youtu.be/xCiTrv2Xh9o>
- **THEORY Field Studies and Wellbeing (Rob Humphreys)**  
A growing body of research has demonstrated that engaging with the natural environment can contribute to enhanced quality of life and wellbeing. However, much of this research has focused on young people's leisure time in the natural environment. Participants were challenged to critically consider how young people feel during outdoor learning. Drawing from these discussions, there was also an exploration of outdoor learning practitioners training needs for supporting young people's wellbeing. Participants had the opportunity to share their thoughts on how young people's wellbeing is supported in outdoor learning, alongside considerations for future practice and policy.  
<https://youtu.be/IATtt91bLQk>
- **STANDARDS The highs and lows of Ropes Courses (AAIAC/ Steve Woods)**  
The first ropes course standard came out initially in 2008, followed by a new version in 2015. Alongside these standards, here in the UK through AAIAC, we have produced our own industry guidance, which was recently updated in 2021. This presentation starts by looking at standards. What are they, why do we have them, how they are formed, and what is their purpose. The middle focused on the UK Ropes Course Guide and why you may want to take a closer look. Then to finish, was an opportunity to ask any questions on any ropes course, zipline or other topic.  
<https://youtu.be/l0gFNiAfErk>
- **WORKFORCE The role of Leading Practitioners of the IOL (LPIOL) (Dan Cook)**  
In this workshop we explored what makes a Leading Practitioner, why the Award has a flexible, tailored approach. We discussed the benefits of the process, how and why you can and should take this route. The Leading Practitioner of the IOL award identifies the qualities, commitment and experience of an individual who goes beyond their brief, who champions and influences innovation and excellent practice in any of the broad elements within the outdoors sector. The achievement of a Leading Practitioner though goes way beyond a certificate: its transformational effects are generated in the route to the award based on the core principles embedded in the IOL award pathway of innovation, reflection, development and shaping/creating. Of course, reflecting past achievements is of most value when those capabilities continue to be directed in developing individuals, organisations or the sector itself, meaning the Leading Practitioner is less a title and more of a continued role with responsibility for the continuation and direction of the sector.  
<https://youtu.be/jwWLHMY84X0>

- WORKFORCE The Youth Sector in Outdoor Learning (Dave Watts)  
Young people are facing a complex and increasingly challenging world. Outdoor Learning and Youth work play a vital role in supporting the holistic development of young people. Join us to look at the power of cross-sector synergy to drive innovation forward for young people and the professionals that support them. Following a brief introduction to the work of UK Youth we chaired a discussion around experiences and practices that bring together the expertise of professionals with fresh perspectives and inspire others to consider how we reshape the landscape for young people, what's realistically achievable and how we can start to bridge professional silos and redefine cross sector strategic and practitioner approaches. Ultimately, our aim is to increase cross sector working to drive equitable access and improve the impact for young people, who sit at the heart of our ethos and approach.  
<https://youtu.be/6MELQ4Ki7cY>

Plenary

[https://youtu.be/7o6l2\\_nLxil](https://youtu.be/7o6l2_nLxil)

The conference wrapped up with the inspiring and award winning film, Not a Hero's Journey by Catherine Dunn.

<https://youtu.be/WB7aTrtYqyc>

Sadly, it is no longer possible to visit our Exhibitors Hall but you can find their details here:

British Canoeing

Global Butterflies on behalf of Activities Industry Mutual

Institute for Outdoor Learning

Adventure Smart

Young Explorers Trust

Skern Training and Skills

Channel Training

EventsAIR

Aid Training & Operations Ltd

Leadership Skills Foundation

University of the Highlands and Islands

Vertex Instructor Training

Adventure Activities Industry Advisory Committee

UK Youth

Manjul Prateeti

Little Chatters

Philosopher's Backpack